
VIRGINIA COAL MINE SAFETY BOARD

Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy
Thursday – July 31, 2014 – 9:00 A.M.

MINUTES

VIRGINIA COAL MINE SAFETY BOARD

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Patti Church
Richard Waddell
Tom Asbury
Carroll Dale
Billy Jo Powers
Mike Kennedy
Joseph Tate

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Harless Mullins

OTHERS PRESENT:

M. Randy Moore, Chief, Division of Mines
Mike Willis, DM Safety Engineer
Mike Skiffington, DMME Program
Support Manager
Tarah Kesterson, DMME PR Manager
Patty Varner, DM, Recorder
Steve Rife, Professional Miners LLC
Greg Tyree, Professional Miners LLC
Allen Whited, SANW Inc.
Kevin Kerr, Matrix Corp.

Meeting Called To Order

Co Chair Patti Church called the meeting to order. A roll call of members determined a quorum with seven members present. Ms. Church and Randy Moore welcomed newly appointed member, Tom Asbury; Tom works at Alpha Natural Resources. Ms. Church welcomed and asked Chief Moore to introduce guests attending.

Co Chair Church called for review of minutes from previous meeting on May 13, 2014; a motion to accept the minutes was made, seconded, and unanimous vote taken.

Review of Proximity Detection

Mike Willis, Mine Safety Engineer, gave an overview of the fatal accident which occurred at the Dominion Coal Corp. Mine No. 30 when a continuous miner operator was pinned between the boom of the machine and the coal rib when tramming it by remote control. The continuous miner's systems were tested at the Pittsburgh, PA Joy Manufacturing Center and Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) Technical Support and tested at Dominion No. 30 with results showing the machine was functioning properly. The accident is contributed to the operator placing himself in a red zone area. The final fatality report will be released on August 1st by MSHA. The HALT Alert developed and distributed by DM for awareness after the recent fatality and the Red Zone Poster which was created in 2004 by Virginia's Problem Solving Group and published by the Lonesome Pine Council of the Holmes Safety Association both have aided in mine safety awareness nationwide. DM has consulted with Matrix and Strata corporations and has researched to conclude that proximity detection is a proven technology. The two systems are in common use and approved by MSHA. Currently, there are 23 proximity detection systems installed on continuous miners of the 81 number of inventory in Virginia. Also, proximity detection has expanded to include a few shuttle cars and scoop machines.

The West Virginia Board of Coal Mining Health and Safety has approved unanimously a rule requiring proximity detection systems in all West Virginia coal mines. This spring, DM proposed to take immediate action via the Chief issuing an operators memorandum requiring all coal mines to submit either an action plan or supplement to the roof control plan that includes proximity detection on continuous miners or operation from a deck when moving from place to place or use of a spotter during moves. The Operators Memorandum is an immediate vehicle for addressing this safety issue as opposed to promulgating regs and statutes. Prior to this meeting the draft memorandum was sent to the Board members for review and comment. Chief Moore asked and received comment for the

Board to advise whether to promulgate regulation for proximity detection. The Virginia Coal and Energy Alliance for operators has advised that most of their companies already require the technology. Mr. Moore stated DMME does not wish to jeopardize with undue regs the ability of the small operators to run their operations in today's market. The sample generic action plan developed by DM for use by operators which incorporates the stipulations was reviewed. The action plan included a requirement that qualified persons be trained as spotters / helpers for the continuous miner operators when the machines are not equipped with proximity technology.

The Board received comments from those visitors present on proximity detection and the effects on operations.

Matrix Corporation representatives, led by Kevin Kerr, presented a video animation and a cart field demonstration of their IntelliZone proximity detection technology to the Board and fielded questions. The typical cost for the system is \$89,000 inclusive of training and servicing.

Members of the Board commented on their approval of the approach being taken by DM on proximity detection. Tom Asbury made the motion to accept the draft Memorandum to Operators; Billy Powers seconded the motion, and all members voted in favor.

Review of Proposed Coal Mine Safety Law Update

The Board refreshed upon proposed updates to the Coal Mine Safety Law: Mine Rescue Sec. 45.1-161.67 through 45.1-161.76 requiring mines to have two fully equipped mine rescue teams as per CFR Part 49; Tracking Section 45.1-161.174 to include language that tracking systems must be maintained in useable and operative condition; Fire-fighting Sec. 45.1-161.200 requiring monitoring systems to be maintained in useable and operative condition; Equipment Sec. 45.1-161.193 electric equipment with a potentially dangerous condition must be removed from service until corrected; and Surface 45.1-161.258 incorporate same language in 45.1-161.249 of underground chapter for provision that surface mine foreman must see that all requirements of the act that pertain to his duties and health and safety of the miners is complied with.

Rick Waddell made motion to recommend the proposed changes to the Coal Mine Safety Laws; Billy Powers seconded the motion, and all members were in favor.

Resolution on Appreciation of Frank A. Linkous

The Board's resolution on show of appreciation of former, retired Chief Frank A. Linkous was read into the record. Mr. Linkous was a tremendous asset to the Board and especially to coal mine safety for many years. Mike Kennedy made a motion that the resolution be accepted into the minutes; Rick Waddell seconded, and all members were in approval.

❖ **Next Meeting: To be announced at a later date.**

Adjournment

Upon a motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Varner
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Secretary